

Division *of* Family Services

*2001-2008
Accomplishments*



THINK OF
THE CHILD
FIRST.

DELAWARE CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT

INTRODUCTION

This document was created to record the incredible accomplishments of the 360 Division of Family Services staff who work tirelessly each day to make a difference for Delaware's children and families. Without these caring and committed staff, these feats would not be possible. Though it is nearly impossible to record all of the fine work that occurs every day for the children and families of Delaware, it is our hope that by highlighting what we can, there will be continued efforts by the Division to document additional staff accomplishments. This will serve as both a historical record of outstanding work by current staff, as well as to create a pathway for future success.

[Carlyse Giddins](#)
Director

[Laura Miles](#)
Deputy Director

These Chinese Proverbs say it best:

If one has determination, then things will get done. - [Anonymous](#)

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. - [Anonymous](#)

Quotes by Maya Angelou:

"...talent is like electricity. We don't understand electricity. We use it."

"Something made greater by ourselves and in turn that makes us greater."

Follow the fellow who follows a dream. - [E.Y. Harburg](#)

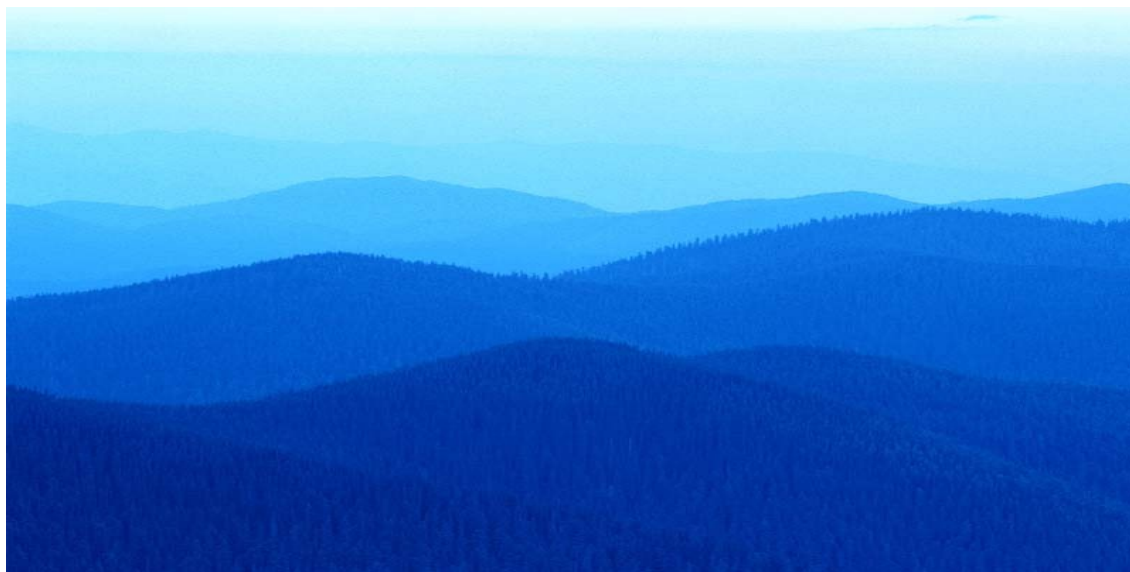


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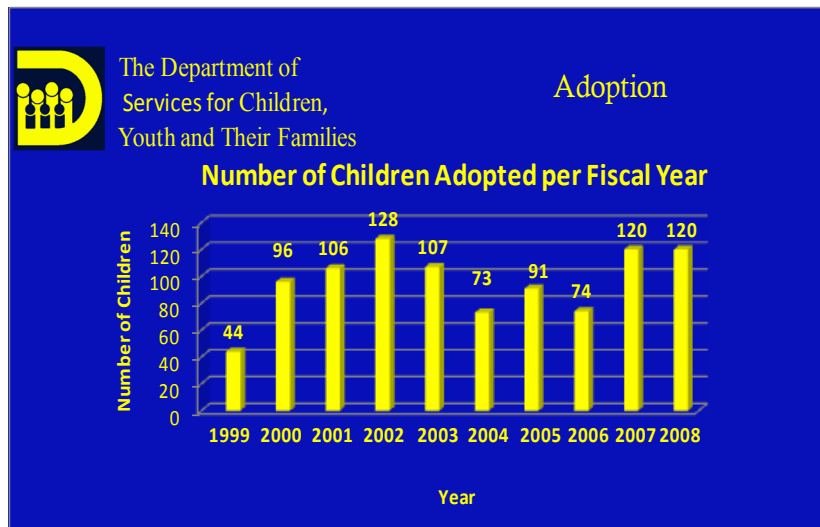
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ADOPTION

Adoption continues to be a great success story. With the increased number of children in foster care, we are experiencing another adoption bubble. In FY07, 120 children for whom the Division of Family Services held parental rights were finalized in adoption. This accounted for almost 14% of all children leaving placement with DFS during the fiscal year. From FY01 through FY07, 724 children have found forever families. Many of these adoptions have been children ages 8-17, the children who often languish in the system. We have over 225 children with a goal of adoption. We know that permanence is the best option for kids!



The number of children adopted from foster care from FFY 2001-2007 was 715 children (for SFY – 699 children were adopted during this period). There was an increase in the number of adoptions for FFY 2007 by 25 children from the previous year. This increase was partly due to an increase in children entering foster care in the past year. Currently, the Division of Family Services is recruiting for adoptive families for 89 children who are in foster care needing a forever family.

ALTERNATIVE PERMANENT PLANNED LIVING ARRANGEMENT (APPLA)

In March 2007, a group of DFS staff began meeting to discuss youth with the goal of APPLA (Alternative Permanency Placement Living Arrangement). Two months later, the group became a partnership of many community agencies and advocates whose purpose was to better serve youth with the goal of APPLA through:

- Ⓢ Maintaining family connections throughout the life of the case.
- Ⓢ Increasing expectations for planning with families prior to a goal change.
- Ⓢ Continuing to review the appropriateness of APPLA as a goal during the life of a case.

To date, the accomplishments of the group include:

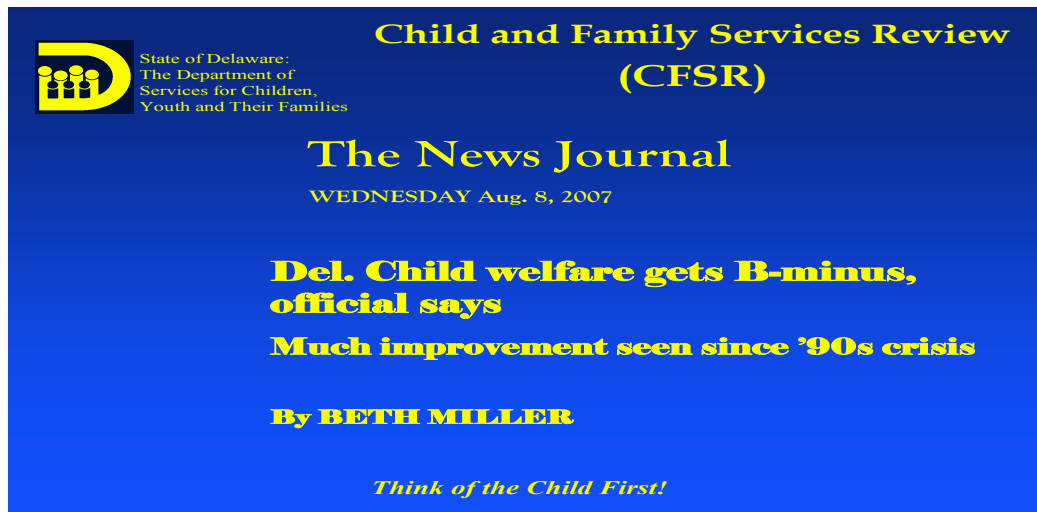
- Ⓢ Development of a review tool to review planning efforts, family connections and ongoing appropriateness of the APPLA goal.
- Ⓢ Completion of a comprehensive review of all youth in DFS, which resulted in several referrals back to the Permanency Committee for a goal change back to reunification.
- Ⓢ Meeting of APPLA staff, statewide, to discuss new efforts to continue connections for youth with family or other community supports.
- Ⓢ Development of a brochure to address domestic violence among the teen population which is prevalent in the age group.
Completion of drafts to outline the role of the child, caretaker and child's social worker in independent living planning.
- Ⓢ Revision to the DSCYF Dependency Policy Checklist, which clarified expectations for planning with family for youth that enter care throughout the department.
- Ⓢ Development of a partnership with People Search to assist in locating missing parents or other relatives.
- Ⓢ Coordination with Family Court judges to encourage judges to require families be ordered to provide family contact information as early at the Adjudicatory Hearing.
- Ⓢ Coordination with the Family Court to encourage judges to schedule all APPLA youth for review every six month rather than annual reviews and to also consider the continued appropriateness of APPLA as a goal during those reviews.
- Ⓢ Completion of taping in preparation of a film telling the story of Delaware's youth who have aged out of foster care.


CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW (CFSR)

The Federal government conducted an on-site Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), which was an intense five day audit of 65 cases using a federal review instrument. Delaware was the first state to undergo this review in 2001 and again the first state in the second round of reviews. The outcome measures included safety, permanency and well-being of children and seven systemic factors.

Significant changes were made to the most recent review as compared to the 2001 review. The number of cases reviewed increased from 39 to 65, with a greater focus on older children in care, and the standard for Substantial Compliance rose from 90% in 2001 to 95% for this review.

As reported in the August 8, 2007 edition of the News Journal, much improvement has been noted in Delaware's child welfare system since the crisis of the '90s.



 State of Delaware:
The Department of
Services for Children,
Youth and Their Families

**Child and Family Services Review
(CFSR)**

The News Journal
WEDNESDAY Aug. 8, 2007

**Del. Child welfare gets B-minus,
official says**
Much improvement seen since '90s crisis

By BETH MILLER


Think of the Child First!

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW (CFSR)

The 2007 Child and Family Services Review was based on Federal Fiscal Year 2005 actual data. The CFSR examined a total of 45 measures to evaluate the state's strengths and opportunities for improvement. Delaware exceeded in five of the six national standards as noted below!

Strengths were also highlighted for five of the seven systemic factors which measure service delivery systems: Agency responsiveness to the community, recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents, quality assurance, training, and information systems.

The table below outlines a comparison of our performance on key outcomes:



State of Delaware:
 The Department of
 Services for Children,
 Youth and Their Families

2007 Child and Family Services Review

Outcome	2001 CFSR Performance	2007 CFSR Performance	DE Performance vs. 2007 Nat'l Standard
Absence of Recurrence of Maltreatment	97.85%	97.1%	Exceeded Standard of 94.6%
Absence of Abuse/ Neglect in Foster Care	99.45%	99.88%	Exceeded Standard of 99.68%
Reunification in less than 12 months	83.6%	88.5%	Exceeded Standard of 75.2%
Finalized adoption in less than 24 months	7.9%	42.7%	Exceeded Standard of 36.6%
Two or fewer placement settings for those in care less than 12 months	97.7%	96.3%	Exceeded Standard of 86%
Re-entry to foster care in less than 12 months	15.5%	22.8%	Below standard of 9.9%

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CHILD PROTECTION REGISTRY

A Child Abuse Substantiation Legislative Work Group was established in June 2001 to review and consider the following:

- ⓐ The process by which an individual can appeal a substantiation for abuse and neglect made by the Division of Family Services.
- ⓐ Whether a substantiation should be reported to employers required to check the registry and, if so, for how long;
- ⓐ Removal of a person's name from the registry; and
- ⓐ The appropriate entity to administer the process.

House Bill 528 was signed by Governor Minner on July 22, 2002 with the new Child Protection Registry law taking effect on February 1, 2003. Key highlights of this new law include:

- ⓐ Changing the name of the Child Abuse Registry to the Child Protection Registry;
- ⓐ Classifying the child abuse and neglect substantiations into four Child Protection levels;
- ⓐ Adding public schools as employers who are required to check the registry;
- ⓐ Providing hearings in Family Court before a Commissioner; and
- ⓐ Allowing automatic removal of a person's name from the registry at Levels II and III, providing no further incidents occur.

Key Accomplishments:

- ⓐ Sweeping policy changes to guide frontline staff;
- ⓐ Reviewing over 12,000 individual child abuse and neglect substantiations in order to classify them under the new four-level system with new finding letters being issued;
- ⓐ Regulatory development and approval;
- ⓐ Redesigning all letters used by DFS to notify individuals about investigation decisions;
- ⓐ Major information system changes to capture the new framework and a time clock for each substantiation to allow for automatic removals;
- ⓐ Collaboration with Family Court officials and the Department of Justice to ensure effective coordination of the new process; and
- ⓐ Establishing a dedicated Division point person at Central Office to handle the extensive administrative duties.



CRIMINAL HISTORY UNIT

Revised and implemented Delacare Regulations for Criminal History Record Checks. (May 2002)

Reduced the risk of harm to children in care by conducting updated DELJIS and Child Protection Registry checks on individuals who are fingerprinted for child care, when said individual changes employers. This is more stringent than Title 11, Chapter 85, Subchapter V, Section 8561, which only requires a criminal background check every 5 years if an individual changes employment in child care. (July 2002)

Assumed responsibility of fingerprinted criminal history record checks and searches of Department records for all YRS employees. (October 2002)

Conducted an average of 37,000 Child Protection Registry checks each year under Title 11, Chapter 85, Subchapter V, Section 8563 for child care, health care, schools and transportation agencies. (February 2003)

Began receiving subsequent arrest notifications through DELJIS for all YRS employees. (April 2003)

Instituted a Decision Making Protocol to guide the evaluation of criminal history and Department record results in order to determine an individual's suitability for employment. (September 2003)

Implemented procedures to ensure all current DSCYF employees were fingerprinted and had completed the criminal history record check process. This was done as required by Department Policy 305 – Conditions of Continued Employment. (March 2004)

Implemented pre-employment background checks and procedures for all Department prospective employees to make an initial determination of suitability for employment. (June 2005)

Implemented procedures to meet the requirements set forth under the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act. The Criminal History Unit requests child protection registry checks in all states in which a prospective foster or adoptive parent and any other adult living in the home has resided in the preceding 5 years. Child protection registry requests are also received and conduct for out of state agencies needing a Delaware check. (October 2006)



DEDICATED PARTNERS

Adoption Partnership

The Heart Gallery concept is a national effort to display professional photographs of children available for adoption. We continue to collaborate with community partners to hold Heart Galleries throughout the state, including Legislative Hall and the Wilmington Drama League. We also developed an online Heart Gallery, which features a new child each month and provides any relevant updates regarding children previously highlighted.

Children's Advocacy Center

With support from DFS, the Children's Advocacy Center has expanded from one site in New Castle County to three sites, one in each county, thereby enhancing the multi-disciplinary approach to investigating child abuse statewide. During this time, the CAC has expanded its services to offer forensic evaluations, medical examinations and mental health assessments. DFS has also been a leading supporter of Finding Words, a state-of-the-art training in the most effective method for interviewing children who may have been victims of child abuse.

Community Partnerships

State funding is limited and does not allow for luxury items for our foster children and foster families cannot always provide those items out of their household budgets. From 2001 to present, we have established strong partnerships with Quota Club which provides duffle bags filled with basic items for all children entering the foster care system; AIG Insurance, who provides Christmas gifts to children in foster care; and the Basket Brigade of Delaware which provides food services to DFS families and families in need. DFS staff in Sussex County developed relationships with several community organizations to assist our foster children with these types of items. Some organizations will provide us with short and specific assistance while others have committed for an ongoing relationship. Those ongoing community partnerships are the Rotary (luggage for foster children), Sussex County Realtors Association Grant (gift certificates for foster children), Hornero Foundation (bikes for foster children), Conley's United Methodist Church (over night bags and school supplies for foster children), High Tide Church youth group (goody bags for Christmas and Summer Swim Party), Delaware Technical and Community College Christmas party for foster children in Sussex), Delaware State University (Christmas party for foster children in Kent County) and Delaware Office of Highway Safety (free car seats for foster parents).



DEDICATED PARTNERS

Delaware State Housing Authority – Housing Supports for Teens

The Division of Family Services works closely with many dedicated partners who assist us in making sure our children achieve positive outcomes. Our collaboration with the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) has led to some real change that directly affects teens aging out of care. DSHA put forth an RFP to initiate a rental assistance pilot program called ‘Step-Up!’ Step Up is designed, in part, to help youth exiting foster care who are at risk of homelessness.

Domestic Violence Advocate (Liaison) Project

In 2000, DFS developed and presented a concept paper to the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council and the Children and Domestic Violence Work Group advocating for the co-location of domestic violence advocates (liaisons) within the child welfare system. Both groups sanctioned the concept and one organization present, Families in Transition (a program of People’s Place II), decided to implement the project. The pilot project began in Sussex County in January 2002. Child Inc., initiated the project in New Castle County in October 2002 and grew to a second office in 2004. Families in Transition expanded the project to Kent County in October 2003. Initial funding for the advocates in all three counties were made possible through federal grant funds (e.g. VOCA) administered by the Criminal Justice Council and approved by the Victims Advisory Committee. The overarching goal of the Domestic Violence Advocate Pilot Project is to improve the quality of services provided to families involved with DFS where domestic violence has been identified as a risk factor. The Domestic Violence Advocate Pilot Project offers a multi-disciplinary team approach to providing services. The team consists of domestic violence advocates and DFS workers in investigation and treatment units. Domestic violence advocates from the private sector are housed with regional DFS staff to facilitate collaboration and create a more convenient process for utilizing the advocate services. Approximately 1,500 adult victims of domestic violence with active DFS cases have received services since the project began.

DEDICATED PARTNERS

Dover Air Force Base

Kent County Supervisor, George Roach, meets regularly with the Dover Air Force Base Family Advocacy personnel to facilitate communication and joint investigations regarding cases involving military families.

Additional Supports

There are countless community partners who help us to serve children. The Quota Club and the Rotary have generously provided bags stocked with critical supplies for children first entering care. This has provided tremendous relief and support to frontline staff and foster families who take these children into their homes on a moment's notice. The Jaycees have held funding and other donated goods drives to support children in care. Local schools and PTA's have provided filled backpacks for foster kids each year. Faith based organizations, such as First Unitarian Church and Christ Church, have rallied around kids in care, as well as those who age out, by providing mentoring, care packages to kids in college, rent relief, and furniture to set up apartments. Without the support of these caring and committed citizens, foster care reform would not be where it is today.



State of Delaware:
The Department of
Services for Children,
Youth and Their Families

Dedicated Partnerships – The Community

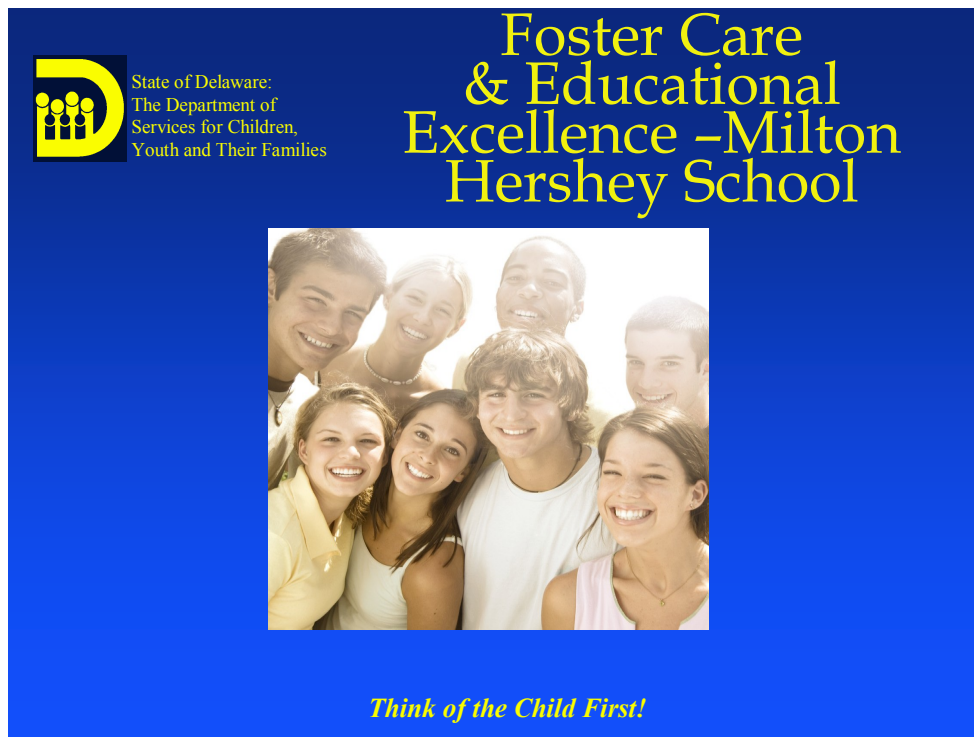
- Quota Club, Rotary, Jaycees
- Schools, PTAs
- Private Citizens
- Faith-based Organizations



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DEDICATED PARTNERS

We also continue our collaboration with the Milton Hershey School (MHS) to offer children in foster care the opportunity to attend one of the most prestigious boarding schools in the country. When members of the MHS leadership team visited with us in January 2005, we set a goal of enrolling five youth before the end of the administration. Just three years later, we have met our goal! We are continuing our efforts to offer this opportunity to more of the children involved with our Department.



The graphic features a blue background. In the top left corner is the logo for the State of Delaware's Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, which consists of a yellow 'D' with three stylized figures inside. To the right of the logo, the text reads: "State of Delaware: The Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families". In the top right corner, the text "Foster Care & Educational Excellence -Milton Hershey School" is written in a yellow serif font. In the center is a photograph of seven smiling young people. At the bottom, the phrase "Think of the Child First!" is written in a yellow italicized font.

State of Delaware:
The Department of
Services for Children,
Youth and Their Families

Foster Care
& Educational
Excellence -Milton
Hershey School

Think of the Child First!

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Division of Family Services Intake and Investigation Program Manager serves as Co-Chair of a Department committee collaboratively working with the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) to develop policies and operational procedures for Unattended Children's Centers (UCC). The Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families will be responsible for managing the UCC in the event that children become separated from their parents or caretakers during an emergency situation. These centers will be co-located within general population American Red Cross (ARC) shelters that will also house special medical needs (non-acute care) and animals.

Significant Emergency Preparedness accomplishments include:

- ⓐ The development of DFS Emergency Preparedness Procedures.
- ⓐ Requirement of DFS contract providers to develop emergency plans.
- ⓐ The provision of Emergency Planning training for thirty-seven foster parents during the 2006-2007 training year by the Coordinator of Emergency Planning in the New Castle County Department of Public Safety, Office of Emergency Management. Since then, all DFS foster parents have had the emergency planning information reviewed by their Foster Home Coordinator during their annual review with an expectation of yearly re-review.
- ⓐ *Office of Child Care Licensing staff person, Lynn Jezyk, became a knowledgeable expert in addressing child care issues during a disaster. She has helped create a Resource Manual for staff, participated in the development of the Emergency Preparedness Plans and the Unattended Children's Center procedures.*
- ⓐ Inclusion of Emergency Preparedness information for Child Care Providers on the *Office of Child Care Licensing* website.

FOSTER CARE REFORM

2001:



Governor Ruth Ann Minner's Foster Care Task Force

Governor Ruth Ann Minner commissioned a Foster Care Task Force in January 2001. Delaware's General Assembly approved foster care enhancements as part of the FY 2002 budget on June 30, 2001 which authorized implementation of the Foster Care Task Force reform recommendations. In each of the following fiscal years, resources and successful changes have been implemented as outlined below.

The General Assembly approved FY-2003 foster care budget enhancements totaling \$783,700. This included four new foster care positions, a new group home, a group home per diem increase, and other foster care initiatives. (July 2001)

Assessment tools were then developed to support a new foster care system consisting of five levels of care (Level 1 - Basic, Level 2 - Intensive Basic, Level 3 - Specialized/Special Medical, Level 4 - Intensive Specialized, and Level 5 - Treatment). The child assessment tool evaluated specific characteristics and needs, providing guidance in identifying the type of placement that would best meet the child's needs. The foster parent assessment tool incorporated factors such as the training they have received, the services they could provide children, and the supports that would be needed to serve the children. The new five-level system of foster care improved how children were initially placed in the system and helped assure stability of child placements by matching children's needs with foster parent competencies. (Fall 2001)

The Division of Child Mental Health Services staff provided additional training for foster parents to enable them to better meet the needs of children with mental health issues in the foster care system. A comprehensive training plan was developed to help advance foster families' training and skills to meet the needs of our state's most challenging children. This plan was developed in conjunction with a private agency community partner. (Fall 2001)

FOSTER CARE REFORM

2002:



Building a Reform Foundation

DSCYF hired three Foster Care positions supported in the State's Budget. This further advanced the implementation of the Governor's Foster Care Task Force recommendations to provide adequate support and supervision to Delaware's statewide foster homes. With the addition of the new foster care supervisor, the Department was able to create a dedicated foster care unit to serve Kent and Sussex Counties for the first time. (January 2002)

DSCYF hired a Volunteer Coordinator position to help advance the foster parent support system. This person meets with the foster parent clusters in the state to review and discuss foster family needs and to put appropriate support plans into action. The adding of this position was instrumental in gaining business support and community-based resources for children. (February 2002)

DSCYF entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Delaware's Department of Health and Human Services to implement kinship care. (February 2002)

Statewide foster homes were organized into geographical clusters of families with a foster parent facilitator chosen to lead each cluster. These clusters provide support and resources to foster parents, especially new foster parents. The cluster facilitators are compensated for their efforts to support other foster families through difficult situations. (Spring 2002)

The General Assembly continued financial support in the amount of \$944,600 for: higher level reimbursement of foster parents who are trained and accept the most challenging foster children; an increase in the foster care recruitment budget from \$8,000 to \$60,000 annually, and the annualization of fiscal year 2002 initiatives. The added recruitment dollars enhanced marketing of the State's need for more foster families to serve our most challenging children. (July 2002)

FOSTER CARE REFORM

The Division of Child Mental Health in the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families issued its first annual special edition of the Foster Family Network Newsletter to educate foster families on mental health services for children. (July 2002)

A new group home was opened to serve eight of the most challenging teen girls in the state's child welfare system. The group home obtained support from the local school district, the community (neighbors, law enforcement), and Department personnel. The group home was the first in Delaware to have a policy that the provider would accept any girl into its home who met the program's criteria with the provider agreeing to not dismiss a child for presenting challenging behaviors. The state contract has a No Deny/No Dismiss clause to ensure that children were accepted and not discharged when the child acted out. (September 2002)

A community partnership was formed with the International Quota Club, who began providing ongoing care packages for children entering care. Infant children receive a bag with all of the needed supplies and older children receive age appropriate items to get through the transition. (October 2002)

2003:  Mission: 21st Century Children ~ Best Practices

The Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families forged a successful collaboration with the Department of Education so that foster children entering school are provided with special attention in recognition of their unique needs. (February 2003)

DSCYF established a support group for foster teens in Sussex County. (March 2003)

The General Assembly approved additional foster care funding of \$520,100 for the third year of the foster care level enhancement. (July 2003)

For the 2003 – 2004 school year, the mandated statewide school training highlighted foster care to educate school professionals about the unique needs of children in foster children. (September 2003)

FOSTER CARE REFORM

DFS collaborated with the Foster Care Reform Planning Committee to issue “A Blueprint for Excellence in the Delivery of Child Protective Services.” (September 2003)

The Department’s State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) was modified to support the new 5 level foster care system, thus automating the matches between children and foster families. (October 2003)

The Department designated placement, primary case management responsibilities and centralized all foster care contract management with the Division of Family Services (October 2003)



2004: Continuing the Transformation ~ Making Progress!

DSCYF increased partnerships with faith-based organizations. Abraham’s Attic, an Outreach Ministry of Victory Christian Fellowship Church, offered new clothing, shoes, and pajamas to children and teens entering foster care. (June 2004)

The state’s budget supported foster care initiatives enhancements in the amount of \$630,000 to support a foster care contracted rebid process and annualization of enhanced level payments. (July 2004)

DFS issued the first Foster Parent Cluster Newsletter containing training information, education updates, and resource information to better meet the needs of the foster parent clusters. (August 2004)

A “Commitment to Foster Children” statement was published and used as a framework throughout the provider system network. (September 2004)

All contracted foster care services were rebid to create a continuum to better meet the needs of the most challenging children. The Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued with language about providers meeting the needs of 21st Century children, as well as if children met the criteria of a provider’s program, the child could not be denied placement or dismissed. Placement stability was deemed a critical priority. (December 2004)

The Department created a Foster Parent Handbook. (December 2004)

FOSTER CARE REFORM

2005:



Growing a System of Care Service System

DSCYF requested funding to provide behavioral health assessments for all children entering foster care. The request was approved and screenings began in February 2006. All children ages 4 and older are screened to determine their behavioral and mental health status and linked to appropriate follow up services as needed. (March 2005)

New Foster Care, Group Care, and Shelter Care contracted services were awarded. These newly awarded contracts supported the Foster Care Reform efforts in the State by addressing significant behavioral and emotional issues of foster children with wraparound services consistent with System of Care approach to service delivery. The contracts also required that providers be responsible for the national standard of stability of foster care placements as the state agency is held to this standard. Contractual language included stability of foster care placements as a desired outcome. (April 2005)

DSCYF held a Walk for Kids Walk-a-Thon to raise money for “quality of life” expenses that foster parents cannot afford. More than \$11,000 was raised. This money is used to support children attending well-being related activities, such as wrestling and cheerleading camp, therapeutic horseback riding, and other enrichment activities. (May 2005)

An additional group home was opened in southern Delaware serving four teen boys and four teen girls. (June 2005)

The 143rd General Assembly enacted House Bill Number 279 by adding provisions of the McKinney-Veto Homeless Educational Assistance Improvement Act. The words ‘awaiting foster care placement’ were added to the code. This change permitted all children who enter foster care to remain at their home school with transportation provided by the home school district. This is significant because a foster child experiences enough disruption due to abuse and neglect without having to change schools upon placement in foster care. The State legislature, through the enactment of this bill, made a strong statement that foster children should not lose the ties of their friends and social network when they are removed from their families. (July 2005)

The General Assembly funded behavioral and mental health contracted screenings for children entering foster care in the amount of \$200,000. Additionally, they added over one million dollars in financial resources to support the contracted foster care shelter, group care and specialized/treatment foster home providers. (July 2005)

FOSTER CARE REFORM

2006:



We're Moving in the Right Direction!

A contracted provider began behavioral and mental health screening of all ages 4 to 17 children entering foster care for the first time. (February 2006)

The Council of State Governments selects Delaware's foster care reform efforts as a regional finalist for their Innovations award. (June 2006)



2007:

Shoprite Blue Ribbon Partnership and New Providers

DFS partnered with Shoprite, a local supermarket chain, to advertise and bring attention to the Foster Care Program. By selling blue ribbons at the super market, nearly \$5,000.00 was raised to support the extra curricular needs of children in placement. (May 2007)

Implementation of the Governors task force recommendations continued with the addition of another foster care provider. The new provider provides an additional 18 treatment beds with aftercare services included in an effort to reduce children from returning to care. (July 2007)

Teen girl support group began in New Castle County with faith based organization, Victory Church, sponsoring the meeting location. (September 2007)

Fost/Adopt Program

Adoption and foster home coordinators joined forces to implement an internal program of adoption preparation classes followed by adoptive home studies for DFS foster parents. This program assists agency foster parents to become eligible for consideration as adoptive resources. This can lead to less placement disruptions and shorter stays in foster care.

INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

The ILP developed a partnership with Delaware Army National Guard. The Guard, at no cost to the ILP, conducts the ROPES course each year for 30-35 foster youth. Youth participate in training and exercises that enhance and improve their leadership skills and interpersonal development. (July 2001)

The Delaware Youth Advisory Council (YAC) was officially formed. Foster youth and adult advisors participated in a two-day conference and provided input in the development of the YAC. By-laws were drafted at the conference. By-laws were adopted in January 2002; amended in November 2005. (October 2001)

Conducted the first statewide Annual Youth Conference. At least 75 youth attend the conference each year. Youth participate in conference planning and participants consistently give the conference high ratings. (August 2002)

An Independent Living Strategic Plan was developed. This plan was designed to create a comprehensive system that produces better outcomes for foster care youth served within the program, including those who age out. The Independent Living Benchmark document was developed to help guide the work with youth from 14- 21 years of age. (September 2006)

The first YAC Newsletter was published; publication is on a quarterly basis and is designed by the youth. The newsletters contain YAC activities and volunteer services, youth literary and artistic talents, achievements by foster youth. (June 2007)

YAC applied for and received a grant from State Farm Insurance in the amount of \$45,191, to implement financial literacy programs for youth in foster care. The goal is to increase financial knowledge by opening and managing a savings account, learning about loans and interest rates, and much more. In addition to this education, youth who open savings accounts will receive matching funds through the grant. (February 2008)



LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

141st General Assembly 2001-2002

HB 154 – Strengthened Termination of Parental Rights law and shortened time for adoption to become finalized.

HB 528 – Child Protection Registry changes. Implemented new levels and expanded the expunging and appeals processes.

SB 233 – Required daycare centers operating for part of the day with 13 or more children to be licensed by the Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL).

142nd General Assembly 2003-2004

HB 78 – Included the use of criminal histories of any party or adult member of a child's household when determining the best interest of the child.

SB 235 – Permitted use of Ivyanne Davis funds as seed money to garner additional Chafee funds for youth in the Independent Living Program.

SB 265 – Clarified investigation and treatment caseload standards and codified the training over hire positions.

SB 271 – Allowed youth in foster care to be considered under the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act for local school attendance.

143rd General Assembly 2004-2005

HB 279 – Confirmed that DFS and DOE practices pertaining to the McKinney-Vento Act can be used for children in foster care.

SB 120 – Provided for Child Protection Registry checks for employees of the State Service Centers.

SB 337 – Required the Family Court to make specific findings before ordering visitation by a child to a correctional facility.

144th General Assembly 2007-2008

HB 266 – Standardized definitions for abuse, dependency and neglect throughout the Delaware Code.

SB 113 – Reduced caseload standards for DFS investigations staff from 14 to 11.

SB 171 – Made changes to modernize the mixing law.

SB 262 - Allows caseworkers from the DFS to sign for teens in foster care to obtain their driver's license from the Division of Motor Vehicle without DFS or the worker assuming liability.



MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING

Family Court

An important partner in our daily work is Family Court. Every time a child enters care in the State of Delaware, it is done with the explicit review and approval of the Family Court. The Family Court conducts all Child Protection Registry Substantiation Hearings and approves all adoptions. We have shared training opportunities for our respective staffs and work closely on the national Court Improvement Project and the CFSR outcome improvements. In March, 2007, we executed an agreement between our two agencies to serve as a framework for collaboration on child welfare related activities.

Division of Developmental Disabilities

In April, 2007, the Department updated the Memorandum of Understanding with the Division of Developmental Disabilities Service to ensure the effective coordination of services for children and families served by DFS, DDDS, and the Division of Child Mental Health Services, where mental retardation and developmental disabilities are suspected or present.

Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health

We are also working closely with the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health as we seek continuity of mental health care for kids who age out of foster care.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

- Ⓢ The Professionals' Guide to Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect was updated in June 2002.
- Ⓢ The Parent Child Handbook was extensively revised in English and Spanish in May 2004.
- Ⓢ A Guide to Understanding the Child Protection Registry was developed in English and Spanish and published in 2004.
- Ⓢ A Division of Family Services informational brochure was developed in 2005.



OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Adolescent Services Changes to Meet Growing Needs

Elwyn - An APPLA (Alternative Planned Permanent Living Arrangement) unit was created to serve youth ages 14 to 18 who cannot return home with plans to remain in foster care until they reach the age of majority. (June 2003)

University Plaza - Due to the increased adolescent treatment caseloads in the region a dual function unit was established with responsibility for Adolescent/Investigation and APPLA/Treatment. (2007)

Caseloads

In the late 1990's, The Division of Family Services experienced high case-worker turnover rates, difficulty hiring new staff, several child deaths, and public scrutiny. The agency reversed this trend by improving the hiring process, establishing an over-hire pool, enhancing training, providing new employee support, establishing caseload standards, and raising salaries for workers with more than one year of experience. This approach included the support of advocacy groups who worked with the legislature to pass a caseload standard law with funding approval. The initial legislation allowed casual or seasonal positions to be added when caseloads were more than 10 percent over the caseload standard with permanent staffing changes occurring in the next budget cycle; the caseload standard was based on the Child Welfare League of America recommendation plus two additional cases. In 2005 and 2007, further enhancements to the original legislation allowed for actual worker readiness to determine the caseload standard, as well as lowering the initial investigation caseload standard from 14 to 11.

Caseworker Turnover Further Improves

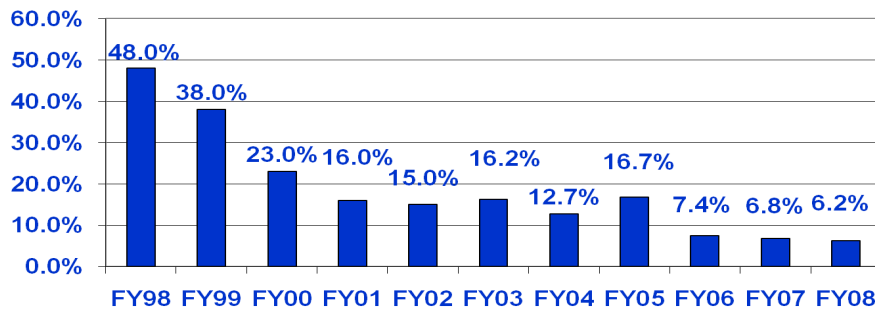
In Fiscal Year 1998, high caseworker turnover rate created low-morale, high caseloads and, worst of all, the increased risk of compromised child safety. With support from Governor Minner, the General Assembly, and child welfare community partners, we were able to obtain additional resources. Coupled with strong leadership and solid management practices, we reduced case-worker turnover to a record low 6.2% in FY 2008.

OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES



State of Delaware:
The Department of
Services for Children,
Youth and Their Families

Accomplishment - Caseworker Turnover



'Think of the Child First'

Child Development-Community Policing (CD-CP)

The Program manager for Intake and Investigation and the Statewide Services Administrator participates in weekly case reviews at the City of Wilmington Child Development-Community Policing (CD-CP) Project. The Division of Child Mental Health provides oversight for this project that pairs police officers and child mental health clinicians when responding to violent scenes 24/7. This project is modeled after the Yale Project in New Haven, Connecticut. Division of Youth Rehabilitation Services administration also attends the weekly meetings. CD-CP has received 1,499 referrals between December 2005 and April 2008. About 38% of those referrals were related to domestic violence and approximately 40% of the total referrals involved DFS. The weekly case conferences have been a significant means for explaining policy and procedures, as well as providing linkage between the criminal and civil investigators and mental health clinicians involved in the cases.

Coaching Units Promote Worker Retention

These units, formed in New Castle, help newly hired workers to assume casework responsibilities under the direction of a Coaching supervisor. Elwyn hired a total of 35 workers who began in the Coaching Unit. Of those 35 workers, 29 are still employed by DFS. Of those 29 staff, 25 are still employed at Elwyn. The other four have transferred to UP or hotline positions. The 25 individuals still employed at Elwyn have continued to climb the career ladder. In the past four years, three have achieved FCT status, six have achieved Master Family Service Specialist status, and five have achieved Senior Family Service Specialist status.



OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Conference Presentation/ National Leadership

In February 2007, Carla Benson-Green, Donna Blakey, George Roach and Shirley Roberts presented Delaware's retention efforts at the National Black Administrators in Child Welfare Conference. Since that time, numerous requests were received from throughout the country by other states interested in modeling Delaware's efforts.

Go B.E.Y.O.N.D., Inc.

Tracy Matthews, a Family Crisis Therapist who founded GO B.E.Y.O.N.D., Inc., is dedicated to supporting at risk youth coping with transition in our community. GO B.E.Y.O.N.D., Inc. provides emergency supplies and basic needs to children affected by foster care, homelessness, substance abuse, mental health, teen pregnancy, and domestic violence. In partnership with the community they strive to ease the impact of these circumstances and advocate for the well being and safety of children by ensuring that their immediate needs are met.

Intake

During this period, all 24/7 Intake and After-Hours Response Units were consolidated under a single statewide administrator. In 2003, the Child Abuse Report Line was centralized as a statewide unit. Formerly a county function, Central Intake was created to enhance the deployment of staff more efficiently and maximize the consistency of decision making on the Report Line. In 2004, Report Line calls were recorded for purposes of accuracy and quality control. New Castle County After-Hours Units, Central Intake and Institutional Abuse Units re-located to the new New Castle County Police Headquarters in 2007 to a larger space with accommodations tailored for the needs of children brought to the office on an emergency basis. In a collaborative effort between Management and Union, a mid-shift worker was implemented within the After-Hours Units. This worker responds to urgent reports at 2:00 pm, thus relieving daytime staff from receiving reports late in the day and needing to work into the evening to meet emergency response times.



OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Kent County

A Department System of Care (SOC) Leadership Team comprised of staff from all three service divisions was formed. The team of regional administrators and supervisors met regularly throughout the following 1½ years with other Department and community partners such as DOJ and OCA to consult and help facilitate plans for difficult cases. The formation and development of this Team has led to a long lasting cooperative relationship between and among staff. (October 2005)

Kent County DFS and the Kent CAC have been partnering to improve multidisciplinary investigations in the Region. Diana Fraker and Diane Klecan met with the Smyrna School District to address issues affecting the sensitive nature of Sexual Abuse investigations in the School District. The CAC Multidisciplinary Team, including representatives from CAC, DFS, DOJ and Law Enforcement, continues to meet bi-weekly to review ongoing investigations and address system issues affecting the investigation and prosecution of sexual abuse cases in the region.

Special Investigator Unit

The Special Investigators are available to assist all statewide caseworkers and supervisors in situations requiring their expertise. The Special Investigator Unit has evolved to assignments which include gathering evidence to support child safety and permanency decisions in civil proceedings, locating missing and runaway children in DFS custody, accompanying caseworkers on potentially volatile or dangerous situations, conducting critical incident debriefings for tragedies which occur on caseloads or in the workplace, and conducting training for social workers on office and personal safety.

Urgent Response Team- Sussex County

Urgent investigations in Sussex County are handled by a special URT unit of six trained investigators that handle all urgent case assignments for the region. The unit operates in two pods of three workers rotating assignments on a weekly basis allowing workers a full week to dispose of investigations from the previous week. This has been a benefit to all staff, the police, criminal Deputies Attorney General, and the community.



OFFICE OF CHILD CARE LICENSING

Delacare: Rules for Early Care and Education and School-Age Centers

Revised Rules were developed and became effective on January 1, 2007. These Rules became the newest of any State and included best practices in health and safety and moved toward increased qualifications for early care and education staff. The educational level of staff is most closely associated with quality of care.

Delaware First Professional Development

Delaware was the first State to initiate a professional development section dedicated to what was then known as the “child care field”. This became known as Delaware First Professional Development and was a part of the Office of Child Care Licensing from 1989 until July 2006, when it moved to the Department of Education. Delaware First advanced child care toward greater professionalism. Today the field is known as “Early Care and Education” in recognition of the importance of the early preparation of children ready to learn to succeed in school and in life.

Governor’s Award for Excellence

OCCL was a finalist for the 2008 Governor’s Award for Excellence. It was an honor to be nominated by the Department for the hard work of the OCCL Staff in developing and implementing the Delacare Rules for Early Care and Education and School Age Centers.

OCCL Website

The OCCL website has come alive. The website serves as the means to get information to the public and providers in a timely manner. This is a constantly changing site with information being updated on a regular basis. Our “links” section helps child care providers and parents find needed resources. Soon the website will become one of the few in the nation to offer the public the ability to search for information about licensees. This includes non-compliances found during inspections, substantiated complaints and identifies licensees placed on enforcement actions. All but the enforcement action information will provide a window of three years of information and will eventually show five years of information. The information will be current within 24 hours. This achievement has been accomplished through a partnership with MIS who took OCCL’s charge under the Parents Right to Know Act and brought it to life.

QUALITY ASSURANCE & DATA TEAM

Division of Family Services Report Card

In December 2004, DFS finalized and distributed the first DFS Report Card. The report card includes 22 outcome measures within four key reporting areas: Financial, Customer Perspective, Process Management and Employee Perspective. Of significant note is the inclusion of the six National Standards regarding safety, permanency and well-being performance.

DFS Quality Assurance Case Review System

In July 2007, DFS introduced the last assessment instrument, 'Rejected Hotline,' into its comprehensive case review system. The QA system already evaluates performance in Intake/ Investigation, Treatment and Placement/ Permanency. Each month, over 77 case reviews are completed, the results of which are compiled on a quarterly basis and reported to Administration and the regional offices in an effort to inform and enhance casework practice. Individual case review results are also returned to the regional offices and reviewed by staff addressing specific strengths and areas needing improvement. Emphasis in outcome reporting is placed on the agencies performance in addressing safety, permanency and well-being for every child active in a case. Other areas of performance review include CAPTA and Department Policy 201 "Integrated Service Planning". In addition, the QA system is used to evaluate performance in many of items identified in the Child and Family Service Review's on-site review feedback, Program Improvement Plan and the federal Annual Progress and Service Review.

Digital Cameras/Printers

In 2005, the DFS data team collaborated with a stakeholder to evaluate, purchase and distribute digital cameras and printers for every unit statewide. The use of the cameras has enhanced the collection of evidentiary material during Investigations; provided staff with the opportunity to take pictures of children and aided in the development of Life Books for children in long term foster care.

CIP Project

In 2004, Delaware was one of only three states (including Connecticut and Texas) selected to participate in the National Evaluation of the Court Improvement Program, Court Improvement Project (CIP). Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Children's Bureau, the five-year study is being carried out by a partnership of three organizations: Planning and Learning Technologies (Pal-Tech, Inc.), the Urban Institute, and the Center for Policy Research. DFS is collaborating closely with Family Court CIP staff and the partnership organizations in its contribution to this valuable study.



QUALITY ASSURANCE & DATA TEAM

Stakeholder Collaboration

DFS data team has continuously collaborated with or reported to Senator McDowell, Child Protection Accountability Commission, Child Placement Review Board, Office of the Child Advocate, and the Court Appointed Specialist Advocate program, to ensure appropriate data collection and sharing. DFS provides Senator McDowell's office and CPAC with a quarterly report reflecting a rich detail of caseload data and staff turnover rates, consistent with SB 265 and SB 113. On a monthly basis DFS provides the CPRB and the OCA/CASA programs with a report reflecting children entering and exiting DFS custody and foster care. Such reporting has ensured appropriate reviews are scheduled for children and appropriate representation is planned for every child in care. DFS also reports data annually to Kids Count for inclusion in their annual report on children in Delaware.

Independent Living Executive Summary and Report Card

DFS maintains a database of information received from Independent Living contracted providers and compiles a quarterly and annual Report Card. Developed in 2005 the reported measures regarding IL youth include education achievement, employment, housing and mentoring and positive adult supports. The report card looks at both the DFS youth population and the out-of-care IL adult populations.

NIS-4 Project

DFS Sussex County was one of 122 counties nationwide selected in 2005 to participate in the Fourth National Incident Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS-4). The NIS-4 will measure the incidence and prevalence of child maltreatment by a wide array of demographic characteristics. Like its predecessors, the NIS-4 is a Congressionally mandated study. It was mandated by the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-36). DHHS is conducting the NIS-4 through a contract with Westat, a national social sciences research firm that also conducted all three previous NIS cycles. Assisting Westat in study planning and in CPS recruitment and data analysis is Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc. The NIS-4 findings will be given in the mandated Report to Congress. The project is scheduled for completion in December 2008 and will contribute greatly to the understanding and needs of child abuse and neglect.

TRAINING

Child Abuse & Neglect 101

The Professional Development Unit (PDU), which is a member of the CPAC Training Subcommittee, helped to develop and deploy “Child Abuse and Neglect 101” training throughout the State.

Collaboration with other System Partners

- ⊗ In 2007, the PDU served and contributed on the planning committee of the Courts and Attorneys Training organized under the supervision of Patricia Hearn, CIP Coordinator.
- ⊗ On April 30, May 1 and 2, 2008, CPAC members Anne Pedrick and Allison McDowell co-chaired a heavily attended statewide conference, “Protecting Delaware’s Children,” with presentations by state and national experts. The PDU Administrator was an active member of the planning committee for this conference.

Community Based Provider Support Training

The PDU is an integral part of the Department training network. DFS training is open to sister agencies in the Department as well as community partners. Additionally, community based and state agencies are regular presenters in our new worker training series. Such agencies in partnership with DFS are the Children’s Advocacy Center, Community Legal Aid Society, and the State Police.

PDU trainers, program managers and administrators, and regional staff regularly provide training or perform speaking engagements for community agencies. Some of these agencies are Children and Families First, Wilmington College, DSU, Widener University, West End Neighborhood House, and St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church.

Department of Education Training

For the past eight years, the Division of Family Services Professional Development Unit has developed and coordinated the annual training of teachers, associates, and contracted providers of the public school system, in the detection and reporting of child abuse and neglect. Videos, power point presentations, mandatory reporting and other useful information for schools are accessed by the schools through the Department’s schools web site for direct use. If a school prefers a DFS presenter for a staff meeting or training, PDU deploys a trainer or other skilled staff member to the school.

TRAINING

New Worker Training

The Professional Development Unit (PDU) executes 171 hours of New Worker Core Training for each new caseworker in DFS. Essential training topics include: Foundations of Abuse and Neglect, Risk Management, Legal Mandates, Interviewing, Domestic Violence, Child Development, Substance Abuse, Separation, Placement and Reunification and one-on-one child welfare computer system (FACTS) training. Field Safety Training is now an integral part of the course offerings, enhanced by the expertise of the Division's special investigators who have police and social work credentials.

Refresher Training

The PDU also provides Refresher Trainings to all DFS Caseworkers and Supervisors based upon QA feedback and case review information. The following sessions have been offered since 2001.

- Ⓢ History Refresher Training for Managers and Supervisors (2002) taught the importance of history to case decisions, why history is important from the Office of the Attorney General's perspective, and why it is helpful in Court.
- Ⓢ Safety Assessment and Planning Refresher Training (2002) trained eleven safety factors to be assessed.
- Ⓢ Safety Planning Refresher Training (2003) trained the development of Child Safety Plans.
- Ⓢ Comprehensive Case Decision Making Refresher Training (2004) was performed to improve case workers' use and documentation of vital information in making casework decisions.
- Ⓢ Safety Planning/History Refresher Training (2004) concentrated on the incorporation of history use in Safety Planning.
- Ⓢ Documentation Refresher Training (2006) addressed good casework documentation.
- Ⓢ Treatment Refresher Training (2006) addressed the essential elements necessary to develop case plans.
- Ⓢ Let's Get Engaged Training (2006) addressed the engaging families with challenging issues within the family.



TREATMENT SERVICES ENHANCEMENTS

Family Assessment Tool

In 2001, DFS revised their family assessment tool. Workers now complete a thorough assessment on all families receiving treatment services by utilizing the Family Assessment Form (FAF). The FAF was originally developed by the Children's Bureau of Southern California. A workgroup comprised of DFS management and supervisors modified the FAF so that it would best meet the needs of our staff in assessing families. The FAF now requires workers to assess a family's level of functioning in eight different domains, looking at their strengths as well as areas of concern. Information gathered from the FAF is then pulled directly into the family's service plan, allowing for a logical flow of information. The information system was modified to ensure that the on-line version of these documents matched those used by frontline staff.

High Risk Infant Protocol

In 2002, DFS implemented the High Risk Infant Protocol. It is the goal of this protocol to develop comprehensive discharge plans for all infants determined to be high-risk who are also currently active with DFS or whose case has been accepted by DFS for investigation. The discharge planning process is completed utilizing a team approach to include the development of the DFS Safety Assessment and Interdivisional Service Plan with clearly defined time frames and responsibilities for all team members. This team could include, as appropriate, DFS, hospital staff, a member of an apnea monitor team, home health care agencies, the Division of Public Health, and the infant's family.

SENSS

In 2003, the Department initiated the Service Entry Needs and Strengths Screen (SENSS). This tool allows for the assessment of every child that is active with the Department. Staff completes the SENSS on all children residing in their own home. Information obtained from the SENSS is used in the development of the Family Service Plan and the youth's Integrated Service Plan.



TREATMENT SERVICES ENHANCEMENTS

Service Array for Spanish Speaking Families

In 2007, the Division established a Spanish Service Array workgroup. This workgroup is comprised of statewide Hispanic service providers whose aim is to increase awareness of available services to Spanish-speaking clients and to identify service gaps. A matrix of Spanish-speaking services will be developed and distributed to Division social workers.

Substance Abuse Liaisons

Beginning in 1996, DFS obtained substance abuse liaisons as part of a Federal demonstration project. The substance abuse liaisons provide a variety of invaluable services to our staff as well as our clients.

Three certified substance abuse liaisons were funded, one for each County in the state. This Federally supported project officially ended in 2001.

Recognizing the value of the substance abuse liaisons, DFS realigned contract dollars in order to continue this valuable resource. One downside to the project was that there were only three liaisons. This meant that our Newark office was without benefit of a substance abuse counselor. A point in time survey conducted by the Treatment Program Manager revealed that approximately 51% of the families receiving treatment services had a substance abuse problem. Given this high statistic, it became vital that all four of the main office locations in the Division have access to a liaison. Beginning in July 2004, the Division carved out contractual dollars in order to provide four certified substance abuse counselors, one for each regional office.

Transfer Instruction Sheet

In 2004, the Department initiated the use of the Transfer Instruction Sheet (TIS). The purpose of the TIS is to succinctly capture the most current medical and educational information on a youth when they move from one placement to another. The sending caregiver completes the form at the time the child leaves their home. The TIS shows the names, addresses and phone numbers of the youth's most recent physician, psychiatrist or psychologist. It also captures the most current medication information, special precautions the receiving caregiver should be aware of, and up to date information regarding the youth's school setting.

WORK SPACE ENHANCEMENTS

In August 2007, the New Castle County Report Line staff and Institutional Abuse investigators moved into the new New Castle County Police headquarters. The new location afforded those staff individual work stations for each employee and adequate space to interview clients, if needed.



In July 2008, the Region I staff moved from the Elwyn Building, where they had been located since 1996, to the Beech Street location. The move resolved overcrowded conditions and parking problems at Elwyn and allowed for additional growth, if needed.

